

THE NEED TO INCORPORATE “AKINNAH” CONCEPT AS A STRATEGIC AND HOLISTIC MODULE FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR ENGINEERING STUDENTS

Abdul Kamil Jamaludin ^a, Tuan Sidek Tuan Muda ^a, Azizan Ramli ^b

^aCentre of Modern Language and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Pahang,
Lebuhraya Tun Razak, 26300 Gambang, Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia.
Tel: +609-549-3111

^bFaculty of Chemical Engineering and Natural Resources, Universiti Malaysia Pahang,
Lebuhraya Tun Razak, 26300 Gambang, Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia.
Tel: +609-549-2893

Corresponding author: Abdul Kamil Jamaludin, tel.: +609-5493108; fax: +609-5493112; Centre of Modern Language and Human Development, Universiti Malaysia Pahang, Lebuhraya Tun Abdul Razak, 26300 Gambang, Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia; e-mail: abdulkamil@ump.edu.my

Abstract

The issue in human capital development is of two kinds; the interaction in physical views and spiritual enhancement. This paper discusses the second kind on how spiritual element leads to develop a notion of human capital development. Drawing from key Islamic texts, relevant prior literature, and interview with an expert, we elaborate and discuss definition of “*akinnah*” concept and delineate what it suggests for developing the module for a strategic and holistic program on human capital development. The study was conducted based on available published articles from Quran (sacred text), Al-Hadith (prophet said), journals, books, and other reliable sources related to the study of sustainability of human development based upon Islamic principles. The study also focuses on selected materials and concentrates on Islamic perspective and the examples presented in this article provide new information on the importance of spiritual development towards successful human capital development programs. This study is perhaps one of the first to address the definition of “*akinnah*” and its importance as a baseline to create a holistic module for human capital development programs.

Keywords: “*Akinnah*”, spirituality, human capital development.

1.0 Introduction

Human capital development is an agenda that should be prioritized because it is fundamental to sustainability, excellence and glory of civilizations. Due to its importance to the nation, Malaysian Government has allocated about RM45.1 billion to finance programs related to human capital development in the Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010.

Human development is the current phenomenon as everyone is sensitive, committed to excellence and strive to develop in order to become more knowledgeable, more skillful and more effectively able to address problems in life (Abdul Rahman Aziz, 2001). According to scholars of Islam, human is divided into two parts, physical body, and spiritual elements. Therefore, to develop it, both aspects should be taken seriously. Even the spiritual element is the main basis for the development.

The real goal of the process of human capital development will not be achieved when the spiritual aspect is not taken seriously. The behavior of individuals, whether good or bad is a result of a spiritual aspect. More specifically, it refers to aspects of the formation and educating the heart (Khalim Zainal Aminudin, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary to explore and understand deeply the description of “*akinnah*” which is in the heart of a person. The study was conducted to describe the characteristics of “*akinnah*” in the effort to develop human. In fact, the understanding of these concepts can help to develop human capacity building modules for engineering students.

2.0 Literature review

The efforts to develop human module from the Islamic perspective must be digested by the five types of human intelligence which God has created for human. As Allah said in the Quran (39:9) *"But He fashioned him due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding): Little thanks do you give?"* According to KH Toto Tasmara (2001) these verses have given a sign that human were prepared by God ever since he or she was born with the five other intelligences, namely:

- i. Spiritual intelligence: ability to listen to one's conscience, good and bad in the moral sense of how to place him or her in the association.
- ii. Intellectual Intelligence: the ability to play the potential of logic, the ability to calculate, analyze, and mathematics (logical-mathematical intelligence).
- iii. Emotional intelligence: ability to control oneself and understand the rhythms, tones, music and aesthetic values.
- iv. Social intelligence: the ability of a person in a relationship with another person either individually or in groups. Included in this intelligence are the interpersonal, intrapersonal skills and ability to communicate (linguistic intelligence)
- v. Physical intelligence (bodily-kinesthetic intelligence): ability to play in coordinating and body signals.

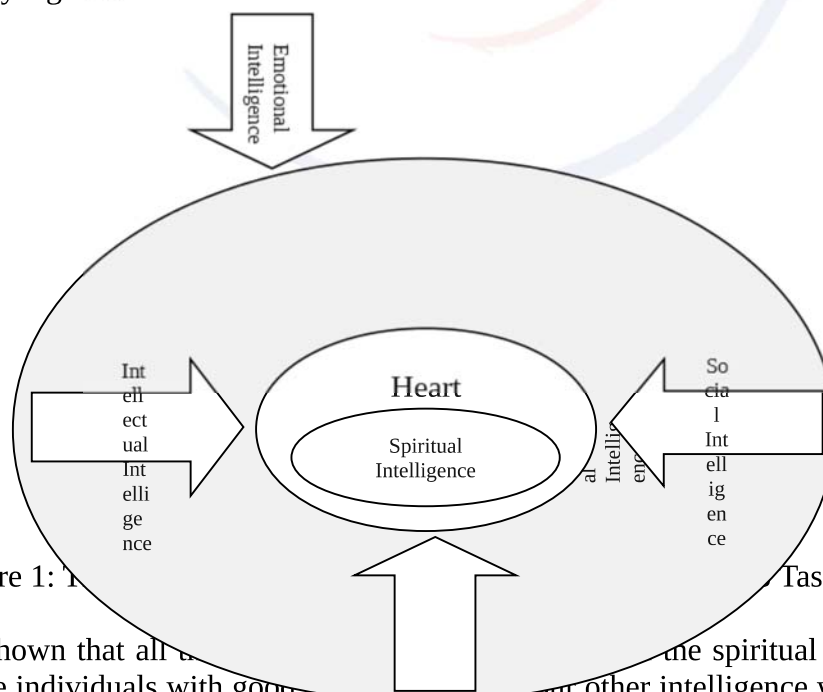


Figure 1: The Five Types of Human Intelligence (Tasmara, 2001)

Figure 1 has shown that all the other intelligences are heart driven. The spiritual intelligence until it is able to produce individuals with good character. The other four intelligences which are heart driven will only give added value to contribute to the ambience of a prosperous and peace among human. Furthermore Hawley (1993) observes that spirituality is a transcendent personal which states is often difficult to describe and must be experienced since it is seen as being beyond one's physical senses,

mind and feelings. In this state individuals are able to transcend their normal limitations to see fresh new realities and possibilities have a holistic perception of reality, and perceive the underlying oneness of life (Vaughan, 1989).

Varied definitions were given on the meaning of spirituality. Literally, spiritual is defined as sensitivity or attachment to religious values (Merriam-Webster). Spirituality is also defined as a value which relates to or affects the human spirit or soul and it touches that part of us that is not dependant on material things or physical comforts (Living Words of Wisdom). For some individuals it involves religious connotation (Vaughan, 1989). While this study is, to discuss a concept that is related to the development of spiritual intelligence of people based on Islam. The concept of “*akinnah*” which will be debated in this paper is actually derived from the verses of the Quran.

2.1 The Quranic verses and their connection with *akinnah*

In the Quran there are four verses that mention clearly about these concepts. According to Yusuf Ali (2005) the verses which were translated are:

Allah SWT said in Surah Al-An'am verse 25 *“Of them there are some Who (pretend to) listen to thee; But We have thrown Veils(“Akinnah”) on their hearts, So they understand it not, And deafness in their ears; If they saw every one Of the Signs, they will Not believe in them; in so much that when they come to thee, they (but) dispute with thee; The Unbelievers say: “These are nothing but tales of the ancients”.*

As Allah said in the Quran Surah Al-Isra' verse 46 *“And We put coverings (“Akinnah”) over their hearts (and minds) lest they should understand The Quran, and deafness into their ears: when thou dost mention thy Lord- and him alone-in the Quran, they turn on their backs, fleeing (from the truth)”.*

According to the comment made by Yusof Ali:

“The invisible veil being put against the ungodly on account of their deliberate rejection of truth, the result is that their minds are fogged so that they cannot understand and their ears are clogged so that they cannot hear. In other words the effects of Evil become cumulative in shutting out Allah's grace.”

In Surah Al-Kahf verse 57, Allah has said that *“ And Who doth more wrong than one who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord but turns away from them, forgetting the (deeds) which his hands have sent forth? Verily We have set veils (“Akinnah”) over their hearts so that they understand this not, and over their ears, deafness. If thou callest them to guidance, even then will they never accept guidance”.*

Yusof Ali response to this verse as quoted as follows:

“Considering the power of sin, and how it gets hold of the hearts of men, and considering all the wrongs that men have done, it is the height of folly and injustice on their part to turn away from warnings which are given expressly for their good. But a stage of callousness is reached, when, by their own choice, they have rendered themselves impervious to Allah's grace. At that stage a veil is put over their hearts and they are left alone for a time that they may commune with themselves and perhaps repent and seek Allah's Mercy again. If they do not, it is their own loss.”

As Allah said in the Quran Surah Fussilat verse 5 *“They say: ‘Our hearts are under veils (**“Akinnaḥ”**), (concealed) from that to which thou dost invite us, and in our ears is a deafness, and between us and thee is a screen: so do thou (what thou wilt); for us, we shall do (what we will!)”*.

Yusuf Ali comments as a response to this verse;

“This either a superiority complex adopting the sarcastic tone of an inferiority complex, or it expresses calculated indifference to spiritual teaching. In effect it says: ‘Our hearts and minds are not intelligent enough to understand your noble ideas, nor our ears sufficiently acute to hear their exposition: you and we are quite different; there is a gulf between us. Why worry about us? You go your way, and we shall go ours!’”

2.2 Definitions in terms of language

It is crucial to understand the meaning of the word *“akinnaḥ”* in language terminology in order to understand the true meaning of the concept which will be discussed in this writing.

The word *“akinnaḥ”* is derived from Arabic and it functions as a verb. (كَنَّ). The root words for it are (الْكَنَّة), (الْكُنْ), and (الْكَنَانُ). It is defined as to have a purpose in maintaining and protecting something. The word (الْكُنْ) means a building or shelter that protects from the cold and warm like home. The plural forms of this word are (الْكَنَانُ) and (الْكَنَّة). Meanwhile the word (الْكَنَانُ) in plural form (الْكَنَّة) is defined as (الْأَغْطِيَّة) which means a closure which is available in the human heart. (Ibnu Mānzur, 1990). This word when used to something that is in itself a means to hide such knowledge (Al-Munjid, 1999).

According to Abu Hayyan (1993), the word *“akinnaḥ”* rather than a cover because it is included in the chapter *“Isti'arah Mahsus Li al-Ma'qul”* which uses a word that can be seen to represent something abstract to easily understood by the logical mind.

The conclusion from the language point of this word carries two purposes, namely an outer cover, such as houses or buildings and cover an abstract in the human heart.

2.3 Definition of Islamic Scholars in the opinion of exegesis

According to Al-Qurthubi as quoted by Khalil Mahyudin Al-Mais (1993), we have made the cover of their hearts in return for their disbelief. They are not being heard and understood but not to take advantage of what they hear and be guided to the truth. Their position is as such they do not listen and understand what is being said.

In addition to this, Ibn 'Asyur said *“akinnaḥ”* is the plural of the word *“kinan”*. It is defined as *“al-Ghita”* for it is hiding something in order to protect it. The cover is seen as an abstract because the heart does not accept the truth like something is being blocked.

Meanwhile, Wahbah al-Zuhailiy (1991) response to this definition as he said *“akinnaḥ”* is the cover has made the heart is unable to absorb meanings, rules, secrets and mysteries which are available in the verses of the Qur'an.

Al-Mawardi views *“akinnaḥ”* as a cover that prevents the understanding and ability to understand better. He also believes that there is coverage in the verses of the Quran is an abstraction barriers are

likened by God with the obstacles that can be seen. Thus, the heart does not understand and take no heed of such a container which is placed a cover so there is nothing to enter.

According to Abu Hayyan (1993), God uses the word “*akinnah*” the cover as a parable to illustrate cautious infidels a lesson in understanding and revelations.

2.4 Remarks and conclusions on the meaning and conceptual exploration of “*akinnah*”

The authors conclude that the word “*akinnah*” in the Quran is a negative concept of the human heart that should be taken serious attention. Research and in depth exploration of this concept is based on the reviews of some Islamic scholars in this paper is hoped to get us closer to the understanding of the barriers which are at the human’s heart. These barriers are called “*akinnah*”. Clearly, its existence would hinder efforts to develop integrated human capital.

3.0 Methodology

The study was conducted based on available articles collected from journals, books, and other reliable resources related to “*akinnah*” concept. Drawing from Muslim sacred text, relevant prior literature, we elaborate and discuss the concept and definition of “*akinnah*” (veils) and what is suggested for human capital development approach.

4.0 Results and discussion

4.1 Incorporating “*akinnah*” concept into integrated holistic module

Civilization literally derives from Latin word *civitas* which means city (Osman Bakar et.al 2009). Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2001) defines it as “a society that is well organized and developed”. Terminologically, the word refers to achievement in physical development like infrastructure and human development. (Osman Bakar et. al 2009). Undoubtedly, humans have played very important role in moulding and transforming world from a state to another and from nowhere to a great civilization and again to the downfall.

In fact, humans are unique in creation. According to Islamic point of view, the creation of them is the best of moulds as Allah said in the Holy Quran: “We have indeed created man in the best of moulds”. (al Tin 95: 4). In another verse Allah has Said: “We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation”. (Al Isra 17: 70)

Quran has described the creation of human as in Al Mu’minun verse 12-14 : “Man we did create from a quintessence (of clay). Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed. Then we made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then we developed out of it another creature so blessed be God, the Best to create.”

Human body consists of two main parts which are physical and spiritual. Physical part consists of hair, skin, flesh, bones, blood and others that are in form and can be seen. Whereas, spiritual is something that is not in form and cannot be seen but it does exist like soul, lust and appetite, emotion and intellect (aqal). Nubli (2007) in discussing human development stressed that they must be developed in both parts. Both are equally important.

In physical aspect, human needs a strong and healthy body, conducive and healthy environment, good infrastructure, good governance system. So is in developing spiritual aspects. Nubli has suggested that in developing spiritual aspect, the emphasis should be on five elements:

- 1- Intellect - it differentiates human and animal. It plays a pivotal role in human life. Throughout history, human gained their achievements and civilizations by the help of intellect. It also contributes in differentiating civilized and uncivilized people. Therefore, nurturing it properly is essential. However, intellect alone does not guarantee the success because all are interdependent.
- 2- Emotion- it involves capability of controlling feelings like the feelings of sad, happy, stressed, angry, anxious, satisfied and so forth. If someone is given proper education on how to control the feelings, then it helps a lot in producing a good person.
- 3- Lust and appetite - both have to be controlled and educated. Naturally, both often encourage human to commit something that solely fulfilling the needs of physical desire. However, humans need these both characteristics because without both, humans can hardly move forward. What do they need is nurturing them accordingly.
- 4- Soul- it moves the physical. It moves heart (physical), blood and so on.
- 5- Heart- heart can be divided into two physical and spiritual. Physical heart is the one located at left chest. It pumps in and pump out the blood from and to entire body. Spiritual heart cannot be seen but it does exist. The saying like 'love you from my heart' represent its existence. The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. once said that "in the entire body, there is an organ which if it is good then the entire body is good and vice versa. That organ is the heart'. The heart is the one that makes decision.

From the above brief discussion, it is clear that human are from the integration of many elements which finally constitutes a product which called human. The consolidation of these many elements into a body also depicts the needs of human to the integrated knowledge. Integrated knowledge can be sought in a holistic education system. A system which emphasizes the importance of having and mastering hard skills as well as soft skills needs to be developed. A system which only focuses on hard skills will finally produce students without excellent soft skill. As a result, it will create a materialistic society which contains selfish people who do not care others. Their ultimate goal is fulfilling the bodily needs.

4.2 The development of contemporary module for engineering students

The traditional approach for most of engineering schools was to produce engineers equipped with sufficient knowledge on technology development and exploration of creativity and innovation. Obviously, there was less priority given on the spiritual enhancement and social obligation. However, due to the increasing awareness of the needs, the modern approach of engineering teachings has incorporated the element of these two into the curriculum structure.

In Malaysia, the co-operation between Malaysian Government and Board of Engineers Malaysia (BEM) has resulted in establishment of Engineering Programme Outcomes or PO's (Table 1) whereby the introduction of integration approach between technological inputs and social obligation has been materialized. All of these PO's are the expected attainment of engineering students which they may acquire by the time of graduation. These Programme Outcomes are generically adapted from Engineering Accreditation Councils of BEM as outlined by Washington Accord.

Table 1: Programme Outcomes of Engineering Students (Source: Engineering Programmes Accreditation Manual 2007, Board of Engineers Malaysia)

No	Programme Objective (PO)
1	Ability to acquire and apply knowledge of science and engineering fundamentals
2	Acquire in-depth technical competence in a specific engineering discipline
3	Ability to undertake problem identification, formulation and solution
4	Ability to utilize systems approach to design and evaluate operational performance
5	Understanding of the principles of design for sustainable development
6	Understanding of professional and ethical responsibilities and commitment to them
7	Ability to communicate effectively, not only with engineers but also with the community at large.
8	Ability to function effectively as an individual and in a group with the capacity to be a leader or manager
9	Understanding of the social, cultural, global and environmental responsibilities of a professional engineer
10	Recognizing the need to undertake lifelong learning, and possessing/acquiring the capacity to do so.

PO6 till PO9 are obvious in term of its contributions to social obligation and the values in which engineering students ought to attain but the rest of the outcomes actually indirectly influenced by these values. Such proactive actions taken by engineering academia to inculcate social obligation was a major contribution towards ethical and social-responsible engineers. However, the mechanism of current teaching methodologies may not be able to meet all of these PO's and even if it is attainable, the issue on sustaining these values will be the next challenge that requires prior attention among academia.

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the need to explore the definition of “*akinnah*” is of paramount important since we need to identify the veils that become a barriers as it will lead to stimulate the development of holistic module for human development programmes. This determination will be a baseline to restructure and revamp our current academic curriculum or to establish separate module whereby engineering students ought to undergo. Accordingly, the outcomes of this intensive study will be embedded into teaching methodology of engineering programmes as it will help to instill the spiritual values among students. The failure of incorporating the elimination of “*akinnah*” attributes into teaching curriculum will hinder the success of attainment of the programme outcomes for engineering programmes.

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